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SUBJECT: Paramaribo: Request for American Corners Sustaining Funds in FY10

REF: 09 STATE 123621

11. (U) SUMMARY

(A) Embassy Paramaribo requests "American Corner Sustaining Funds" for FY10. Post's vigorous efforts in harnessing the American Corner's (AC) capabilities as one of Post's premier public diplomacy tool paid off with a dramatic 132% increase in the number of audience members reached in 2009, even as it streamlined the number of AC's programs while enhancing the quality of current offerings.

(B) In response to the growing popularity among local residents of the American Corner (AC) as the de facto cultural and educational arm of the U.S. Embassy, Post, with significant American Corner Funding support, embarked on more strategic marketing that targeted specific groups for specific programs, utilizing traditional means of promotions combined with people-to-people marketing campaign. In 2009, the number of guests who visited and utilized AC resources more than doubled from the previous year's figure, while the number of American Movie Night patrons more than tripled, to include patrons in the District of Nickerie, Suriname's second largest city along the Suriname-Guyana border.

(C) The American Corner served as the vibrant springboard from which Post launched a total of 32 public diplomacy outreach activities in 2009. These activities varied in breadth, scope, and themes: from hosting a breakfast meeting for the American Chamber of Commerce of Suriname at the American Corner, to co-sponsoring spirited discussions on environmental issues among 235 secondary school students, and staging a business consultation meeting between Suriname's import/export business groups with a representative from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

(D) As Public Diplomacy remains at the heart of the United States official effort in Suriname, Post continues to face the challenge of achieving our 2010 goals - with public outreach as the number one goal in our Mission Strategic Plan - with lean human resource capital: Post has just one USDH PolEcon officer who also supervises our public diplomacy effort, one FSN PD assistant (currently a vacant position), and one EFM PolEcon Assistant who assists on PD programming. A fulltime USDH Public Diplomacy Officer position has been approved for Paramaribo and was on the bid list. The new PAO is projected to arrive at Post in summer 2010.

(E) In 2010, Post will continue to rely on the growing public appeal of the AC, the steady support of the AC's host institution, the Cultural Center of Suriname (CCS), and the continued AC funding, to sustain current successful programs while exploring fresh initiatives in expanding Post's public diplomacy outreach activities. END SUMMARY

## 12. (U) AMERICAN CORNER PROGRAM ELEMENTS

### (A) Description of Programs

In 2009, Post staged a total of 32 programs that catered to diverse audiences, which included college/high school/primary school students, musicians, business leaders, indigenous peoples, women's empowerment groups, tours and travel representatives, and government officials.

Six new programs premiered at the American Corner in 2009: (1) A photo-poster exhibit that celebrated the Suriname-South Dakota State Partnership Program; (2) Women in History Conference; (3) Breakfast Meeting of the Suriname's American Chamber of Commerce; (4) Consultation/Meeting between Suriname's import/export groups and a representative from the U.S. Department of Commerce to discuss trade facilitations and U.S. customs; (5) World Earth Day celebration with primary school students; and (6) the English Story Hour, a book reading event for secondary and primary school students in celebration of the International Education Week. These new programs were in addition to programming for Black History Month, Indigenous Peoples Day, and the monthly American Movie Night

offerings. Total program attendance in 2009 soared to 2,556 compared with the 1,100 number of audience reached in 2008.

Post capitalized on the "captive audience" of the American Movie Night to enhance the positive image of the United States among Surinamers. The 2009 American Movie Night, which has emerged as the AC's "flagship" outreach program, featured films that were keyed in to the U.S. monthly themes or the United Nations days. The monthly movies, in addition to showcasing American culture and values, underscored global issues such as press freedom, campaign to stop violence against women, environment, and drugs trafficking. Thoughtful movie programming that balanced Hollywood entertainment with substantive topics, robust promotion of the AC in 2009, and tapping into the youth/student/school market, resulted in the tripling of movie patrons from 324 (2008 data) to 1004.

Similarly, as Post and American Corner staff engaged in a committed promotion of the American Corner as an iconic U.S. cultural and information resource center, the number of patrons who utilized the AC's inventory of materials and equipment rose from 2008's number of 500 to 1045 in 2009.

### (B) List of Programs

- American Movie Night (12 monthly films))
- Suriname-South Dakota State Partnership Program  
Photo/Poster Exhibit (1)
- Black History Month Events (5, including cultural  
concerts, drums workshops, and book reading)
- Women in History Conference, Presentation, and  
Discussion (1)
- American Film Festival in Nickerie (6 films )
- World Earth Day film screening for school kids (1)

- American Chamber of Commerce Breakfast Meeting (1)
- Indigenous Peoples of Suriname Day (2 cultural presentations/workshops by the Kevin Locke Ensemble at the CCS)
- U.S. Trade Facilitation and Customs Consultation with U.S. Department of Commerce official
- International Education Week: English Story Hour (2 book reading sessions for students)

Note: For more detailed listing of AC programs and tracking of number of audience reached by a specific program, please see "2009 Box Office Report," "American Film Festival in Nickerie Report," and "2009 American Corner Hosted/Co-Sponsored Programs" attachments. These supplemental data are also posted in the AC Paramaribo website.

#### (C) Media Coverage and Promotion

Post and the American Corner enjoyed generous and positive coverage from the local media in 2009. Local media devoted significant press coverage to Kevin Jones (Cultural Envoy) for the Black History month events, and to Kevin Locke Ensemble (PAI) for the Indigenous Peoples of Suriname Day celebration. Press articles promoting cultural performances that were co-hosted by the American Corner at the CCS and other public venues were amplified by photos in the cultural pages of the print media, in addition to broadcast media interviews. The Ambassador's visit to the American Corner, its resources, student patrons, and youth-oriented programs were the subjects for a segment in the "Youth Journal," a popular ten-minute daily TV news program, during International Education Week. The American Movie Night continued to receive regular monthly radio promotion, free of charge, from one of the American Movie Night patrons who hosts a regular weekend radio talk show.

In addition to media promotions, Post pursued a vigorous people-to-people campaign to promote the American Corner and its programs by complementing traditional and broad approaches with marketing blitz tailored to specific target audience. Aside from handing out flyers, bookmarks, and AC souvenir pens in fairs and other public gatherings, Post worked with schools, non-governmental organization, special interest groups, and government agencies in inviting patrons to specific programs that featured specific themes.

Media promotions of American Corner-sponsored events are reinforced by e-invitations. Post boasts a robust 200+ cultural e-mailing list.

### 13. (U) AMERICAN CORNER OPERATIONS

#### (A) Location and Staffing

American Corner Paramaribo is located in one of the major thoroughfares in the capital city, just three short blocks from the business district and a few meters walking distance from four public schools. Since its inauguration in May 2005, the AC has reaped the benefits of being housed at the CCS, itself a landmark cultural complex that enjoys considerable public esteem. Aside from the American Corner, the CCS also hosts a writers' group workshop center, the national HIV/AIDS prevention training center, an internet caf???? and gift shop, a music school, and Suriname's

equivalent of a national library that receives an annual fund of 40,000 euro from the Dutch Embassy. On the average, 200 people visit the CCS complex daily, thus guaranteeing the AC steady public exposure.

The AC itself is a 25-seat maximum capacity air-conditioned room situated on the second floor of the CCS Annex Building. Adjacent to the AC are a huge exhibition/research space that can comfortably seat 150 people and a medium size function room (capacity 60 seats) that Post uses for the monthly movies and other medium scale events. These rooms are in addition to the 400-seat capacity of the CCS auditorium, which Post utilized extensively in 2009. Other foreign missions that have staged cultural presentations in the CCS auditorium in 2009 included the French, Indonesian, and Indian embassies.

The AC is managed by a full-time AC director and a part-time AC assistant director whose salaries are borne by the CCS foundation and the government. Both AC managers are fluent in English.

#### (B) How FY2009 Funding Was Applied and Its Impact

The FY2009 funding of U.S.\$9,000 invigorated Post's and AC's initiatives in enhancing AC's existing inventories, creating new promotional materials, sustaining basic services, developing new programs while improving the quality of existing ones.

In September 2009, Post purchased materials that are meaningful and valuable to the local students' English language learning experience. Based on the Recommended Reading List for High School Students submitted by the Ministry of Education of Suriname, Post was able to identify and acquire American books that now form a growing collection. These new inventories are supplemented by three sets of twenty-six book titles, also drawn from the Ministry of Education list, that are now the resource nucleus for an English Book Club (EBC) that Post started promoting during International Education Week in mid-November 2009. Along with the high school books, the AC also purchased materials for the English Language Learning Club (ELLC), a language learning program for middle school students that was developed in partnership with the Youth Affairs Division of the Ministry of Education. Post plans to officially launch the EBC and the ELLC in February 2010. In September 2009, the American Corner also added subscriptions to seven popular U.S. magazines, such as Time, Newsweek, National Geographic, and Sports

Illustrated. Post's expenditures of \$3,523.00 on reading materials accounted for more than one third of the FY2009 total budget.

In April 2009, Post launched the concept of a mini American Corner On Wheels Program by bringing American Movie Night to the District of Nickerie, Suriname's eastern border city with Guyana. The three-day event, billed as "American Film Festival in Nickerie," showcased films that highlight Black History, native American culture, American sport, and Broadway, and drew in close to 350 movie patrons composed of young professionals, students, members of civic groups, business people, media, and orphans. Inspired by the positive result in Nickerie, Post plans to bring American Movie Night to other underserved sectors of Suriname's twelve districts in 2010.

Post is in the pre-production stage of promotional pamphlets that will detail AC services, resources, and program offerings. The CCS has also committed to installing a steel/metal signage in a strategic corner in front of the CCS compound that will advertise

the American Corner to the steady stream of pedestrians, and vehicular drivers and passengers that pass by the CCS complex daily. Funds for these projects were already obligated in 2009 and Post hopes to complete these projects by February 2010.

Of the \$9,000 FY2009 sustaining funds that Post received, AC expended \$8,250 and obligated \$1,402 that has not been liquidated pending final completion of the projects (for a total of \$9652.00). The FY2009 AC sustaining funds of \$9,000 were matched by Post public diplomacy funding support of \$10,356.00 for the staging of Black History Month (Cultural Envoy), Indigenous Peoples of Suriname celebration (PAI), and the American Film Festival in Nickerie. Post did not receive any private fund donations in FY2009, but in-kind radio publicity was received.

#### (C) Plans for the Future

In 2010, Post will continue to identify and pursue opportunities to grow the American Corner as a multifaceted organization that caters to the resource needs of a broader audience. As the American Corner continues to nurture its base audience, comprised mostly by youth and students, by offering more and quality youth-oriented programs, it will also initiate and cultivate linkages with professional groups for possible collaboration in the future.

With the planned launching of the English Book Club (EBC) and the English Language Learning Club (ELLC) in early 2010, Post will continue to fine tune its current inventory in order to make the American Corner not only a repository of reference materials but also a lead promoter of reading English books (fiction and non-fiction), which should be popular because foreign, imported books can be quite expensive for everyday Surinamers to purchase. To this end, Post hopes to be able to purchase additional books, drawn from the 150 titles that the Ministry of Education suggested, with FY2010 American Corner funds. As youth remains one of the major targets of AC outreach activities, Post plans to invite and transport underserved students from Suriname's outlying districts to the American Corner/CCS for special themed events.

In 2010, the American Corner will pursue its plan to host State Department web chats on topics that will attract educators, arts/crafts, and trade groups, women in management positions, religious leaders, tourism representatives, and youth leaders, among others.

#### (D) Itemized Budget Request for 2010

\$3300                      Wireless internet services and electricity  
(upgrade to ADSL at 512/128 kps)

\$2500                      Books, subscriptions, audio/visual materials,  
poster exhibits, and updated reference materials

\$1680                      American Movie Night logistics (\$140/month)

\$ 720                      Audience transport costs (gasoline, etc.),  
including student transportation to/from English book  
reading/literature discussions/special events

\$ 800                      Program preparation and support

\$ 800                      Publicity (print media advertisement for Black  
History Month & Indigenous Peoples Day)

\$200                      Anti-Virus Software

\$10,000                                      TOTAL

(E) American Corner Training Provided

The American Corner Director has not participated in any training since the 2007 training in Trinidad and Tobago because of budgetary constraints. Regular, quarterly consultations between Post and American Corner managers were held, however, to provide feedback and guidance to the American Corner.

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